

Socialist ACTION

Socialist Action 2005

Draft Political Resolution

(The general line of this resolution was adopted by the Socialist Action Political Committee on March 2005 for presentation to the April 1-3 2005 National Committee plenum.)

The 2004 Political Resolution adopted at last summer's National Convention devoted considerable attention to the state of the world political economy. We stressed the impact of the deepening world economic crises, brought on by ferocious competition between the U.S. and its powerful and increasingly united imperialist adversaries in Europe as well as Japan, on the policies of the leading imperial powers.

We similarly evaluated the effect of the associated crises of profits and overproduction on world political and military developments.

It is not our intention, therefore, to review the ground we have covered quite thoroughly over the past several years. World imperialism has found no way to mitigate its growing contradictions other than at the expense of the world's working classes. These include continued and deepening attacks on living standards everywhere as well as war and more war. We have reproduced last summer's National Convention-approved Political Resolution

as background material for this plenum's deliberations as well as other documents under discussion in Socialist Action.

In this conjunctural resolution we want to focus on several of the key issues in world and U.S. politics that require our immediate attention.

The war in Iraq

First and foremost is the ongoing war and occupation in Iraq, a devastating war that had already taken a toll in Iraqi lives in excess of 100,000 in addition to some 1,500 U.S. soldiers. Contrary to U.S. projections virtually nothing has changed in regard to the quality of life of the

Iraqi people. The infrastructure that was destroyed to a considerable extent two years, in fact 14 years ago, remains largely in a shattered state. Whole cities like Falujah have been leveled. U.S. troops continue to terrorize the Iraqi masses.

The quick victory, stabilization and "democracy" projected by the Bush Administration have not come to pass. While hundreds of billions of dollars have been allocated to U.S. corporations to advance the extraction of oil and otherwise rebuild sectors of the state's infrastructure that are required for the extraction of profits little has been accomplished.

Even here the U.S. has largely failed to reap the benefits of conquest.

This is in large part due to the Iraqi resistance, a diverse combination of forces including fundamentalist and secular groups that have dealt some major blows to a qualitatively superior U.S. force.

The extreme repression of the resistance has relegated it to an underground existence. But its continued capacity to challenge the occupiers is an indication of its mass character. While four workers' federations do operate, they too are repressed with their leaders often murdered by the U.S. occupation forces. They are also plagued with internecine conflicts.

During the period of the open military struggle of the Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr several months ago and prior to the January 2005 elections, polls indicated that 67 percent of the Iraqi population opposed U.S. intervention and occupation. This was the highpoint of the opposition when it appeared that significant sectors of the Shiite population would or could find common cause with Sunni fighters.

Moqtada al-Sadr's initial open defiance of imperial forced a temporary and partial retreat of U.S. military ventures in Sadr City, a poor slum-dwelling area of Baghdad. A similar standoff took place in Falujah where the Sunnis were in control. But this short-lived hiatus soon gave

Way to full-scale bombardment and a massacre that left no doubt that the U.S. had no intention of negotiating anything of substance.

Moqtada-al Sadr and his forces, representing some 20 percent of the Shiite population, have since retreated. Their political representatives have taken posts in the majority Iraqi Alliance party of Ayatollah Ali Sistani. In the Sunni areas voter turnout was some two percent, with the main Sunni above-ground organization, Association of Muslim Scholars, advocating

boycott.

The imperialist overseer's claim that the election turnout approached 56 percent although here too there is mounting evidence that the figures were rigged by the U.S. "specialists" assigned to conduct the elections.

We are nevertheless compelled to recognize that the holding of the election in Iraq, regardless of the occupation and corruption of every sort associated with it, represented a victory of sorts to the U.S. occupiers. In the absence of the kind of united and massive popular opposition to the election and occupation that was required to thoroughly discredit it,

The Bush Administration was able to modestly advance its plans for further exploitation of Iraq's people and resources. Despite this setback, however, U.S. imperialism's first effort of this magnitude since Vietnam is far from secure. It is not at all guaranteed that the occupiers can securely remain in Iraq to implement their plans to exploit what will amount to a U.S.-controlled neo-colonial state. It is more likely that they will be mired down in a hostile environment for years to come.

Among the most important conclusion we can draw from this experience is that the Iraqi resistance has significantly reduced the capacity of the U.S. to intervene elsewhere, thereby making a major contribution, conscious or otherwise, to the struggle against world imperialism.

Limitations of the resistance

The Sunni-led resistance declaration that anyone who voted in the January 2005 election was an enemy of God, and therefore a target for murder, certainly failed in every respect to advance the

cause of unity against the occupiers. Similarly, Shiite leaders who declared that not voting was in opposition to God's will did nothing to challenge the occupation. Shiite/Sunni unity will not be advanced with these politics and methods.

The historic oppression of the Shiite majority by the Saddam Hussein regime, which based itself on the relatively privileged Sunni minority, was no small factor in fostering illusions among significant numbers of his Shiites victims, as well as the oppressed Kurds, in U.S.-style democracy.

Both the failed nationalism of Hussein and his Baathist Party in Iraq and of the region's former nationalist pro-capitalist leaders more generally, as well as the historic collapse of Stalinism, opened the door to an Islamic fundamentalism that is incapable of achieving the unity necessary to advance the cause of the Middle East's oppressed masses.

Having made our position on the political inadequacies of the Iraqi resistance absolutely clear we continue to affirm our unconditional support to the fight against the U.S. occupation. We place no equal sign between the desperate, if not incredible human sacrifices of Iraqi

Fundamentalists (and others who similarly offer their very lives to oppose U.S. occupation) and the monstrous actions of American imperialism, the central purveyor of terror and mass murder in Iraq and in the world.

While we differ strongly with those in Iraq who mistakenly focus their justified hatred of the U.S. murderers on civilian Shiites, we place total responsibility for the horrors in Iraq on imperialism. As with the just struggle of the Palestinian masses we look to the day when a mass-based opposition capable of uniting all the oppressed emerges to challenge the

war-makers in state and regional struggles that combine opposition to national and class oppression.

For now, and we do not hesitate to repeat ourselves, the desperate acts that take place in the name of the resistance, however futile and misdirected in some cases, have been brought on by a ruthless, torturing and murderous imperialist occupation intent on crushing any and all forms of opposition to its plans to plunder Iraq far into the future.

The default of the U.S. antiwar movement

We have discussed the antiwar movement's potential for the past two years. We have often been surprised at the movement's resiliency and have attributed a great portion of it to the capacity of the Iraqi people to resist the occupation, despite the great cost in human lives. Had there been a collapse in the face of the U.S. "shock and awe" bombardment, what most expected to be the case, the U.S. movement would have inevitably followed suit. But we have learned that there are limits to what the resistance can achieve, in part because of its political deficiencies but also because of the massive repression and slaughter it faces. The weapons

at its disposal have also been limited by the tightening military grip of the imperialists.

Another critical factor limiting the potential of the U.S. antiwar movement is the almost total leadership capitulation to the Democrats in the 2004 elections. We have rarely witnessed such a spectacle. The United For Peace and Justice coalition (UFPJ), in particular, literally disappeared for some nine months as its constituent groups and leaders abandoned independent mass mobilizations and instead pursued a victory for pro-war Democrat John

Kerry. While we have experienced similar phenomena in the past, especially during the Vietnam War, the depth and duration of the capitulation must have set a record. During the Vietnam era, it must be said, the ruling class offered Democrats who at least claimed to be "peace candidates." Today the "peace" movement was reduced to supporting a war candidate, indeed a candidate who called for more troops and more funds for the war than George Bush!

At base the capitulation exposed the huge gap between the rhetoric of the UFPJ leaders, purporting to champion a broad multi-issue agenda, and their abject subordination to whatever Democrat reached the top of the near-pre-arranged primary contests.

The ANSWER "coalition" made no effort to fill the void left by the UFPJ. The central leaders of this similarly tightly-controlled group also preferred a Democratic Party victory although they were less craven and more sophisticated in how they presented their politics. But deeds, or their absence, speak louder than words. ANSWER's absence from the field of

action and its political focus on fighting "Bush's War" told the story well.

The glaring absence of a mass democratic united front-type antiwar coalition with a principled leadership weighed heavily on the movement and still does. The capacity to resist the most horrible assaults on the Iraqi people, not to mention the incessant threats of war against a growing number of nations deemed by U.S. imperialism as the "axes of evil," was severely restricted.

The UFPJ, conscious of its objective of providing a left face for the Democratic Party, literally transformed itself into a multi-issue coalition of the first magnitude. With funds and grants from its earlier successes, it put on a significant size staff and established a division of labor

designed to have the UFPJ address virtually every social issue imaginable. They aimed to cast the broadest possible net to capture voter for Democratic Party.

The UFPJ essentially became an organizing center for local, state and national Democrats. It abandoned mass antiwar mobilizations almost entirely with the exception of the 500,000 protestors at the Republican Party National Convention. This New York anti-Bush demonstration, while evidencing deep antiwar sentiment, also demonstrated the futility of

reliance on either of capitalism's twin parties. The potential power represented by a half million protestors in the streets was significantly muted and undermined by the organizer's reliance on bourgeois politics and politicians to end imperialist war.

The power generated by the Vietnam antiwar movement, a movement capable of forcing the world's greatest military power to withdraw from Vietnam, was in large part due to its independent and mass character. Of course, there were other decisive factors that forced the U.S. withdrawal, particularly the courageous and heroic struggle of the Vietnamese. But the capacity of the 10-year long U.S. movement to essentially sustain its independent character was critical to its success.

The success of the struggle, including its capacity to join forces with the powerful civil rights movement, opened the door wide to the emergence of several other social struggles that similarly won important gains for the oppressed and exploited.

The Republican electoral victory has further demoralized UFPJ and its liberal reformist followers, convincing them that resistance to the system outside the Democratic Party is not productive.

Understanding this single point is key to re-building the U.S. antiwar movement. There will be no viable social movement in this imperialist colossus that is dependent on,

subordinate to or in any way associated with America's capitalist parties.

The February 2005 UFPJ national assembly in St. Louis was initially aimed at maintaining the UFPJ's multi-issue course and orientation to capitalist politics. Central leaders had already begun discussions on how best to relate to the 2006 elections.

But the group's top cadre changed gears a few weeks before the assembly and decided to again "focus" on the Iraq War. The pro-Democratic Party leadership core "discovered" in advance of the gathering that UFPJ "lacked the resources" to take up all the issues originally contemplated. This sudden shift took many of group's liberal cohorts by surprise. Convinced

that periodic mass demonstrations are near worthless in comparison to electoral politics and that the only road to social change was through the Democrats, they initially resisted what they considered a fruitless focus on a single issue, like the war in Iraq.

"Leftists" in UFPJ argued that the Iraq war is only a "symptom" of the problem. "We need to address all the issues that are a product of "the system itself," they argued. But "the system" they referred to was not capitalism but rather the "fascist" Bush Administration and the "fascist" government they accuse him of heading.

Groups like the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and their associated group, Not in Our Name! likewise advanced the "fascist" argument with RCP leader Robert Avakian and the RCP all but calling for a vote for Kerry. Bush was declared to be the leader of the "Christian fascists" who had taken over the country. He had to be stopped. The UFPJ's rhetoric did not

differ to any significant extent.

In the days when the Socialist Workers Party played a leading role, if not the leading role in the struggle against the Vietnam War, the reformists of every stripe offered the same arguments. They tired of repeated mass actions; they resisted a central focus on the war; they rejected democratic functioning (which at that time was represented by the principle of

one-person-one-vote) in mass decision-making united front-type assemblies and they fought tooth and nail to subordinate the movement to support to Democratic Party "peace candidates" like Eugene McCarthy and George McGovern.

But the reformists in all their combinations did not prevail. They proved incapable of derailing the movement in large part because the struggle against the Vietnam War was truly a mass movement. An entire generation of youth and a great proportion of the larger population become involved in one form or another. These forces helped to stamp the movement with its

independent character. They acted as a bulwark to ward off any and all efforts to undermine its independent character.

With the mounting threats and/or actuality of U.S. intervention in Iran, Cuba, North Korea, the Philippines and Syria as well as the accomplished interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti and Yugoslavia, we believe that a general demand, of course subordinate to a central focus on the Iraq War, against U.S. intervention and U.S. support to occupations everywhere, is

necessary and appropriate. This includes Palestine, where U.S. aid to the Zionist, colonial settler state of Israel guarantees the continued denial of all Palestinian rights.

We also support the inclusion of demands for fundamental democratic rights, especially since these are under severe attack and infringe on several of the basic rights whose exercise is necessary to build a mass democratic movement. Opposition to the Patriot Act, including its provisions for increased government spying on movement organizations and individuals

And all others can also be easily included in a succinct statement in the text of organizing leaflets, fact sheets and other antiwar propaganda.

Tactics: We advocate the organization of massive, legal, peaceful demonstrations designed to involve the largest numbers possible in the antiwar movement. We have no fetish about organizational forms of protest. In different times, when the level of class combativity is on the rise and the situation warrants, other tactics, including mass strikes, would be appropriate to give expression to the power of the movement. But this is the music of the future.

For now, mass actions are the most appropriate tactic to maximize the expression of the full power of the movement. They are effective in challenging the false notion that the government represents the majority of the people. They increase the confidence of the movement in its own power. They expose participants to a wide range of issues that they do not ordinarily consider. They help lead participants to the conclusion that the capitalist itself system is responsible for today's social evils as opposed to whichever political party or personality happens to be running the government.

Periodic mass actions also reinforce the continuity of the movement, allow for a visible measure of its growing strength and unity, maximize its capacity to involve new sectors of the population in struggle and help convince increasing numbers that the power over public decision-making truly rests in their hands.

Mass actions indeed challenge the prerogative of the war-makers to make war. They raise the political price paid by the ruling class to act contrary to the interests and wishes of the majority. They lead toward the isolation of the ruling class and help expose its minority status and reactionary interests in governing.

For revolutionaries, mass action is not an end in itself, but a step toward even more powerful challenges to capitalism.

For reformists, mass actions are a sometimes necessary routine to convince the ruling class politicians to change their evil ways AND to present a platform for "liberal" Democratic Party politicians to convince the masses that change is possible within the framework of capitalism.

We have no interest in promoting individual acts or small-scale non-violent civil disobedience protests, whether they are conducted by pacifists or faith-based groups. These usually facilitate the victimization of participants and severely limit the participation of the vast

Majority who have no desire to risk imprisonment in order to demonstrate their support for the antiwar movement. We do not object to others who are insistent on organizing such actions, but we argue that such actions should be conducted separate and apart from the mass legal protests organized by the broader movement. We have no interest in lending any credence to

The sometimes uncontrolled anarchist actions that have disrupted or detracted from peaceful mass protests.

Democracy in the movement: This is not an abstract question. The present competing antiwar organizations are essentially dominated by competing political currents on the left who are more concerned with subordinating the movement to their own ends than in maximizing its potential power. UFPJ and ANSWER often dominate their respective decision-making meetings by a variety of representational formulas that guarantee that the groups and individuals they support remain in absolute control.

Our tradition, massive decision-making conferences open to all and based on one-person-one-vote, is designed to include and democratically engage the entire movement. We describe our organizational format as a united front-type organization because in reality it is not a united front.

The classic or historic united front is a temporary association of mass organizations to achieve very limited and immediate objectives. If a striking union, for example, is under attack and faced with scab-herding cops who threaten to break a strike, the broad workers' movement has been called upon to join the battle. The basic decisions regarding strike

strategy, tactics, negotiations, etc., remain with the striking union.

Organization and control of the united front mobilizations emanating from the unity of the broader trade union movement, its component parts, federations or whatever labor structures exist, are determined by votes of the chosen leaderships of these bodies. Where the components of the united front are democratically organized, the mobilized rank and file has a direct and immediate voice.

The primary objective of the united front is to amass the essential class power to effectively defend and advance the cause of the beleaguered strikers. Victories emerging out of such struggles usually increase the possibilities of further mobilizations against the prerogatives of the ruling rich.

In the antiwar movement today, there are no such mass organizations of workers who consciously participate with their ranks. Nor are there leaders who aim to mobilize their ranks. When unions and unionists do participate it is usually minimally, with a few officials and a rank and file that more often participates in small numbers, usually without the knowledge of the union itself.

When the point is reached that a reinvigorated and militant trade union movement decides to engage its ranks in the struggle against imperialist war, the forms of the movement will qualitatively change. Under these circumstances it would be the height of foolishness to propose that an engaged union, able to mobilize thousands and more have the same weight

In an antiwar conference or in any other gathering than a single isolated individual.

At present, this is not the case. UFPJ conferences are organized with some form of delegated representation with the formulas selected in advance to achieve the desired result. Those who attend claiming to represent this or that organization usually have as many followers as the typical antiwar activist who may or may not belong any organization.

During the Vietnam era Communist Party-led national coalitions used a variety of delegated formulas that essentially excluded the vast number of independent activists. It was only when the strength and breadth of the movement reached a point where the Stalinists and their liberal allies could no longer control the movement that truly democratic forms emerged.

The size of the national gatherings increased from a few hundred essentially hand-picked "delegates," representing various Communist Party front groups and those of their liberal allies, to conferences where thousands regularly participated in the deliberations. The rapidly

exploding movement soon rejected any restrictive formulas and welcomed all comers on an equal basis. No one political tendency could dominate. The will of the preponderant independent majority almost always prevailed.

None of the above, however, happened by accident. The SWP and the YSA along with the campus-based Student Mobilization Committee to Bring the Troops Home Now (SMC) worked hard to educate the broad movement as to the merits of the new and more democratic organizational forms as well as the critical importance of principled "Out Now!" politics and a sharp focus on the war.

The SWP's central antiwar organizer, Fred Halsted, in his book, "Out Now!: A Participants Account of the American Movement Against the War in Vietnam," describes the strategy and tactics we employed with great success during those times. The central lessons, albeit with the appropriate modifications based on political changes in U.S. society, are applicable today.

Socialist Action's momentary tactical retreat

We have taken the time to review these matters to remind comrades that the retreat we were recently and briefly compelled to make in regard to taking on the kind of leadership role we had played for almost two decades was a product of simple necessity. Following our split with the Nat. W. group, the very existence of Socialist Action was brought into question. Our

Focus had to shift to maintaining our fundamental party institutions and to recruiting and educating sufficient comrades to continue as a revolutionary organization.

Our retreat was a temporary measure to insure Socialist Action's continued existence.

It was a recognition that the forces we had to assign to help initiate and build the necessary mass actions and democratic antiwar coalitions were insufficient to achieve the required results. We made one major effort to do so in 2003. It started with great promise and ended with a mass action of 350,000 people in San Francisco. But along the way we were not able

To maintain the very democratic coalition we initiated. The combination of ultralefts, reformists, Stalinists and others were dead set against a united and democratic antiwar movement. The significant but relatively small number of independent forces we had assembled proved incapable of withstanding their persistent efforts to eliminate what had begun with great promise. We have reviewed this experience in the past and need not dwell on it further here other than to state that we have not ruled out efforts to help re-orient the antiwar movement. Our ability to do depends only on our capacity to win new forces to Socialist Action. Hopefully, that time is not far away.

We conclude this section with a brief assessment of the recent March 19, 2005 national and international mobilizations against the Iraq war. These were modest in the U.S., with the largest actions taking place in New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Our estimates indicate that all were in the range of 10-15,000 people with smaller protests in the range of 1,000 -5,000 taking place in several other cities and modest protests in the hundreds or less in an estimated 700 locations.

Internationally, there were more impressive mobilizations. London, Rome and Athens were perhaps the largest with an estimated 100,000 participating in each action. Tens of thousands

mobilized across Europe, in the Middle East and elsewhere. It is noteworthy that the size of the protests was generally greater outside the U.S. than in the heartland of imperialism, an indication of the still weakened and divided nature of the U.S. movement.

While we were eager to participate in and help build the modest actions that did take place, as we have always done, it will take a bit of time and require significant changes in the U.S. and international situation until the movement returns to the massive size that we saw just a few years ago.

The possibility of a return to draft army

There is one factor in the present equation that could make an immediate and qualitative difference, the reactivation of the Selective Service System and the establishment of a draft. We have already seen differences among the ruling rich as to the advisability of such a move. On the one hand it is clear that to police the world U.S. imperialism requires many more troops than it presently has available. The experience of Iraq demonstrated that "shock and awe" aside, for the kind of victory imperialism seeks, a victory that at minimum would allow for the long-term exploitation of Iraqi oil, more than a token force is required. The

U.S. is not presently capable of another such venture.

A draft is required by the ruling class rich to supply the necessary human cannon fodder to expand imperialism's reach. But the social consequences would be enormous. Drafting American youth to fight and die for capitalist profit, no matter how much U.S. war aims are concealed by a compliant media, would bring on to the political scene a layer of youth that we have not seen since Vietnam.

In combination with the rising economic and social crises, a draft would inevitably lead to a radicalization that would cut deep into the fabric of society.

We have already seen initial and promising signs of youthful opposition to military service. The growing number of protests against high school and college military recruiters is a first indication. A generalized draft would qualitatively change the character of this effort and the antiwar movement itself.

There have been several reports that legislation is already readied for passage that would implement a draft within 75 days. Such a move would indicate more about the crisis of U.S. capitalism than has been previously revealed. A resort to a draft could only be based on an imperialist gamble that the political price to be paid was low enough to risk what they now

consider to be only limited possibilities for a deeper radicalization.

But war is inherent in the system of capitalist production. It is, as has been said many times, a reflection of politics (and economics) by other means. It is pursued for profit and the very survival of the system, without regard to the human consequences.

Socialist Action is profoundly opposed to any draft in capitalist America. We reject the right of imperialism to make war anywhere. A resort to a draft at this time may well be viewed by the ruling class as a necessity to advance and extend imperialism's interests against its capitalist rivals as well as against the oppressed of the world. In the present circumstances we estimate that a return to a draft army would signal immediate and new wars for plunder.

But the institution of a draft would also represent a direct and immediate threat to the lives of today's youth. We would expect their response to be massive, leading to a qualitative advance in the movement's capacity to fight back.

The advance of the Cuban Revolution

We have closely followed the Cuban Revolution for many years and have established fraternal contacts with the Cuban government. The Cuban Interests Section in Washington regularly sends copies of our paper to Havana where our views are read with interest.

A brief review of what is new in our relations with Cuba and Cuban developments in general will be helpful to comrades.

-Socialist Action has been invited to visit Cuba to discuss ideas with several of Cuba's central leaders in many fields. We have been informed that this will include a meeting with Fidel Castro. We plan a legal visit of Socialist Action journalists as soon as possible.

-The Cubans have indicated their appreciation of the political positions we took last year in regard to the so-called Cuban dissidents, an array of U.S.-organized and funded counterrevolutionaries whose activities were overseen by the U.S. State Department. Our political defense of the Cuban actions in the matter of the U.S.-encouraged Cuban boat and airline hijackers was similarly noted. In this regard, we published some critical articles and a pamphlet challenging the reactionary positions taken by several U.S. liberals including, Noam Chomsky, as well as several social democrats who initiated petition campaigns attacking the just and defensive actions of the Cuban government.

We presented our class position on the death penalty, differentiating its use by capitalist regimes as opposed to its rare application in the beleaguered and revolutionary Cuban workers state, facing a 40+ year blockade and near state of siege at the hands of U.S. imperialism.

-The Cubans expressed their appreciation of the actions we have taken in defense of the Cuban Five, including our successful Bay Area Cuba Conference last year where attorney for one of the Cuban Five, Leonard Weinglass, addressed a large gathering initiated by Socialist Action and broadly sponsored by several solidarity groups. The Cubans have made defense of the Cuban Five a major priority.

-We visited the Cuban Interests Section twice in the past year or so for discussions with both the Cuban Ambassador and the Interest Section's First Secretary. The purpose of the meetings was to exchange ideas, to discuss difficulties faced by the Cuban Revolution and to inform the Cubans of the political activities we have undertaken in defense of Cuba's sovereignty. We have also presented our views on a number of important questions including the 2004 elections where we differed to some extent with our Cuban comrades.

-We attended an important meeting in Washington, D.C. sponsored by the TransAfrica Forum, headed by Bill Fletcher and Danny Glover. The meeting included a presentation of the Cuban view of U.S.-Cuban relations. Following the Cuban Ambassador's departure the group, representing some 40 U.S. organizations concerned with non-intervention in Cuba, discussed

the political basis for the formation of a U.S. movement for normalization of U.S.-Cuba relations.

-In the context of our support for normalization, we are helping to propose and initiate the undertaking of a major project designed to advance this end. This would be a follow-up to the 1999 University of California at Berkeley (UCB) broadly-organized "Dialogue With Cuba

Conference" that attracted 2,000 participants and featured some 30 Cubans in plenary discussions with their counterparts at UCB and from other institution and organizations favoring dialogue with Cuba.

This new initiative would require extremely broad support nationally. It would involve extending an invitation to Fidel Castro and other Cuban leaders to visit the U.S. to dialogue with prominent Americans on normalization. The visit would include several venues across the

Country and would be initially hosted, as in 1999, assuming agreement can be reached, by the University of California. A prominent University of California at Berkeley professor has agreed to explore possibilities for launching this project.

In the event that visas are granted to the Cuban delegation, it would open the door wide to a national dialogue that would represent a great blow to those who prefer war and invasion.

In the event that visas are denied, the most likely variant, the Cuban delegation would still be invited to participate but via a live nationally broadcast satellite hook-up which would allow us to have President Fidel Castro participate at universities and other designated locations

Across the country in the context of university-sponsored conferences. The basic concept is to once again move beyond the usual left-initiated small-scale Cuba solidarity events and reach out to a very broad audience ranging from Congress people who favor trade with Cuba to educators and others who desire lifting travel restrictions to individuals prominent in public life who prefer dialogue not war. Needless to say the Cubans would be extremely eager to engage in such an effort, believing that a U.S. war against them is a real possibility.

Celia Hart fosters a discussion on Trotskyism in Cuba

There have been some developments in Cuba concerning the opening of a still-limited but very important dialogue on the politics of Leon Trotsky. We outline these below:

-The discussion began with an important essay on Trotsky's major contributions to revolutionary politics that was published in the leading Cuban journal Tricontinental Magazine. Authored by Celia Hart, the article presented in a sharp and simple form Trotsky's basic ideas on permanent revolution, "socialism in one country" and "peaceful co-existence." The

context was a damning indictment of the reactionary politics of Stalinism and a championing of Trotsky's life work and politics. Trotsky was placed at Lenin's side as among the foremost leaders of the Russian Revolution. "Our first soldier," he was called. Celia Hart is a member of the Cuban CP. Her parents, Haydee Santamaria and Armondo Hart were legendary leaders of the Cuban Revolution who were captured, arrested and imprisoned along with

Fidel Castro following the July 26, 1953 abortive attack on the Moncada military barracks in Havana, the opening shot of the Cuban Revolution. We promptly printed the entire text of Hart's essay in *Socialist Action* and began inquiries as to Hart's availability for discussion and

collaboration.

-Hart has followed up on her first essay with some 20 additional articles on Trotsky's contributions. She has launched a major attack on the role of Stalin and Stalinism, characterizing these as counterrevolutionary forces in the world socialist movement. Her articles are situated in the context of hailing the achievements of the Cuban Revolution and its ongoing struggle for

socialism in contrast to the capitulation of the USSR and China to capitalism and capitalist restoration.

-We proposed to Hart that SA publish her essays in book form. This was a project jointly initiated by SA and our comrades in the Labor Standard group, with whom we have been collaborating closely on other projects, as well as on our newspaper. Hart agreed, after contacting several groups and prominent individuals familiar with U.S. politics and Socialist Action. We are in the early stages of preparing first-rate translations. With Hart's approval the book will include two 1961 speeches by Joseph Hansen presented to young people on Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution and its relation to the Cuban Revolution. Additionally, our SA/Labor Standard book will include a summary of Trotsky's theory and an introduction jointly prepared by leaders of both organizations.

-Hart continues to write on Trotsky's ideas. The April issue of SA contains a major four-page piece deepening the discussion.

-We have just received a fascinating article written by Hart's father, Armando Hart critiquing the ideas of Joseph Stalin. This represents another breakthrough and a further indication that Trotsky is alive and well in Cuba.

-A major seminar on the fall of the Eastern European states and the USSR was recently conducted in Cuba with five leading Cuban intellectuals participating. We have the complete text of the presentations as well as the audience discussion. The central thrust of all panelists was a rejection of Stalinism. One participant explained that the main pillars of

the state emerging from the Russian Revolution were soviet democracy, nationalization of capitalist property and the revolutionary vanguard or Leninist party. It was agreed that Stalin destroyed the soviets and the party. There were several favorable references to Trotsky. A public discussion of the issue of soviet democracy represents an enormous contribution to the further development of the Cuban Revolution.

-The recently concluded annual Havana Book Fair included a booth organized by the British-based Militant Group that featured books by Trotsky including his "Permanent Revolution." Some 900 copies were sold, according to Celia Hart, who helped staff a booth that displayed huge portraits of Lenin and Trotsky. Hart is a collaborator of the Militant Group and has

attended its conferences in Spain and Pakistan.

-Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has stated publicly that Trotsky's ideas on permanent revolution and socialism remain valid today. Chavez's daughter purchased ten copies of Trotsky's Permanent Revolution at the Havana Book Fair. We will return to Chavez shortly.

-Finally, we have been informed that a 1986 book on Trotsky, written by former SWP member, is under consideration for publication in Cuba. The book was written for high school-aged youth as a photo essay of sorts and designed to introduce newcomers to Trotsky's basic ideas.

The above summary indicates that a discussion is underway in Cuba, however modest, of the fundamental revolutionary ideas of Leon Trotsky. The discussion verifies once again that the Cuban's decision to reject capitalist restoration in all its manifestations and continue their fight for a socialist world has led to an exploration of the full range of authentic revolutionary socialist political thinking, with Trotsky, of course, foremost on the minds of important political thinkers..

We have been informed by knowledgeable friends that Hart's objective is to encourage this discussion inside Cuba and outside, of course. We have no facts to confirm that the Cuban CP itself is engaged in such discussions. But it is reasonable to conclude that when several very prominent Cuban intellectuals and Cuban CP members take up these questions without the slightest interference, a broader discussion may not be far away.

We reaffirm our view that the Cubans are revolutionaries of action in the best sense of the term and deeply imbued with revolutionary socialist traditions and practice. But the Cuban CP is not without major divisions, including a still influential but minority Stalinist current that, like

Its counterparts in the ex-USSR and China, prefers an accommodation with imperialism. The majority of the CP, led by Fidel Castro, has made a conscious decision to reject capitalist restoration. More and more it recognizes that Cuba's fate is inextricably tied to the emergence of revolutionary currents outside Cuba, including in the United States.

Isolated, beleaguered and blockaded, revolutionary Cuba has been compelled to maneuver in very troubled international waters. The fact that its direction remains revolutionary and internationalist is a credit to its leadership. The fact that significant deposits of oil have been

Discovered off Cuban shores offers at least a temporary reprieve from the worst effects of the world embargo/blockade. The fact that Cuba retains fraternal and comradely relations with small revolutionary groups like Socialist Action is testimony to the stress it places on politics and program as opposed to material aid, where we can offer virtually nothing. Our modest

capability of initiating some worthy solidarity projects, some of which can serve to open a few doors in the U.S. and politically serve to stay the hand of the imperialist beast, is similarly appreciated.

We are aware of Cuba's limitations and have predicted that its continued isolation could only lead, in time, to the further development of bureaucratic tendencies and worse. But the capacity of the Cuban leadership to resist these pressures has truly been remarkable, a testament to the quality and dedication of the central leadership team headed by Fidel Castro. The Cubans have remained on the revolutionary road, ever in search of new ways to give expression to the aspirations of its courageous people for direct involvement in the decisions that effect their very lives. The possibility that this will now include a serious examination of Trotsky's contributions as well as movement toward soviet-type institutions of

workers democracy cannot be excluded.

The new developments in Latin America, driven by the massive upsurges of the oppressed people revolting against capitalist neo-liberalism, has also opened new possibilities for Cuba to advance its ideas and win new support.

It is also reasonable to assume that our invitation to visit Cuba and discuss with Cuban President Fidel Castro is no accident. Our first visit to Washington was undertaken at the initiative of the Cubans. At the second visit their invitation to send an SA delegation was emphatically repeated. We were told that it has been a while since we had serious talks on

Many issues and that the Cuban government desired to explore a number of ideas with us. The government proposes to fully host a delegation of five comrades to Cuba.

We informed the Cubans that we accepted their invitation. We will use the opportunity to travel legally to Cuba utilizing our legitimate credentials as professional journalists. We fully intend,

therefore, to use the opportunity to expand our newspaper coverage of Cuban developments and to continue in related publishing projects as well as to deepen our

dialogue.

Needless to say, a formal decision of the Cuban CP to embrace the revolutionary ideas of Leon Trotsky would be a momentous event. It would represent an opportunity the likes of which our world movement has not had since its formation in 1938.

In the Fourth International, SA remains a fraternal minority current in regard to an appreciation of the importance and vitality of the Cuban Revolution. The majority has consistently bent to pressures to distance itself from the actions of the Cuban leadership. The FI's most recent

attacks on Cuba for the defensive actions it was compelled to take against the CIA-financed "dissidents" and hijackers is a sad example. We remain hopeful, however, that these new developments will lead to a major adjustment in the FI's stance toward the Cuban Revolution.

The opportunities before us are enormous. We have some profoundly important openings to deepen SA's involvement in the political defense of revolutionary Cuba and to fraternally collaborate with Cuba's leadership.

A note on Trotskyism

We should pause a moment to ask why, of all the revolutionary leaders and ideas in the world today, important figures in Cuba and elsewhere have turned to Trotsky? The same phenomenon is repeated in Latin America as Trotskyist groups, many beginning to overcome their sectarian past, have emerged capable of some important initiatives. In the United States, it was Mumia Abu-Jamal, perhaps the most well-known political prisoner on earth,

who quoted the "great revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky" in his taped remarks that were played on March 19, 2005 at the San Francisco and New York antiwar demonstrations.

In Europe Isaac Deutscher's Trotsky trilogy, long out of print, has just been republished. Reviewed in a March issue of The Nation magazine under the title "The Impermanent Revolution," social democrat Ronald Aronson felt compelled to present a favorable account of Trotsky's life and accomplishments, being careful, to be sure, to inform readers of his view

that in today's non-revolutionary times and in consideration of the fate of the USSR, Trotsky's ideas, including permanent revolution, were no longer relevant.

The answer to the question concerning the renewed interest in Trotsky in Cuba and elsewhere is simple. Trotsky's banner and politics, in continuity with Lenin's, as well as the ideas and program of Marx and Engels, remains unstained. Celia Hart pointed out that Trotsky was the most maligned figure in revolutionary history. But she was quick to add that those who attacked him most viciously, those who distorted and misrepresented his views,

Were the Stalinists as well as the capitalists around the world. Among the Stalinists, of course, are the Maoists, whose legacy is the restoration of capitalism in China and the immiserization of hundreds of millions.

Similarly discredited are today's social democrats, who in a number of countries around the world head up capitalism's offensive against the working class.

For the best revolutionary fighters, Trotsky represents the struggle against Stalinism, social democracy and capitalism, all of which are associated with, in one form or another, the continued rule of capital and the ruin associated with it.

Cuba was offered the choice between the Stalinist road leading to capitalist restoration or the socialist road leading to human freedom and full social equality. Cuba's choice for socialism, to stand alone, if necessary, in the face of incredible obstacles, has led the first layer of Cuban thinkers to turn to Trotsky. For this initial layer, Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution is reduced to its essence. That is, today only socialism can address and solve the problems facing humankind. Capitalism is bankrupt. It must be replaced by the revolutionary action of the masses everywhere. Socialism is the pre-requisite for human liberation and

progress. Trotsky, proudly described by Celia Hart as "our first soldier," today exemplifies what is best in our Marxist-Leninist tradition.

We cannot resist a final anecdote on the meaning of Trotskyism. During the height of the U.S. struggle against the war in Vietnam William F. Buckley, the rightwing conservative founder of the reactionary publication, National Review, invited the SWP's central antiwar leader Fred Halsted, to appear in a debate format on his nationally-televised program, Firing Line. Buckley had taken great pleasure in demolishing America's leading liberals, who

frequently appeared on his show. But "Big Red Fred," as we called him, was no liberal. Following his debate, where Buckley himself was undone, Buckley remarked, and we will paraphrase here, "We have always been able to deal with the Stalinists. We can negotiate anything with them. But if the Trotskyites ever get power, we are in trouble. They will not

compromise."

Buckley inadvertently paid our movement a great compliment. He understood thoroughly that Trotskyism represented an unadulterated and uncompromising challenge to capitalist power. The historic defeat suffered by world imperialism in 1917 at the hands of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks, Soviet power and the Red Army, shook the world and changed the course of

history. Trotsky's heirs, those of us who are here today and in other revolutionary organizations, and those to come, will shake the foundations of capitalism once again. Trotskyism, in the hands of the Cuban Revolution will prove to be a potent weapon in the rebuilding of the world revolutionary movement. While we must take care to avoid getting too far ahead of ourselves, we are duty-bound to pursue this opening with everything we have.

Venezuela: Another new prospect for revolutionary development

We have carefully followed the ongoing developments in Venezuela. We summarize our basic views and observations as follows:

1) Venezuela remains a capitalist state with a capitalist government led by a capitalist party headed by Hugo Chavez. Both the Chavez government and its closest observers, including the Cubans, affirm that few significant encroachments on capitalist property have been undertaken. But this is still the beginning of the story.

2) The Chavista majority includes highly contradictory elements, with Chavez in control but in association with a minority and still powerful right wing opposed to any fundamental change in the social system. Outside the formal government institutions stands a rightist bourgeois intent on removing Chavez by any means available. It is intimately connected to U.S.

imperialism.

3) The Chavez government has overcome at least two major imperialist-inspired and organized efforts to overthrow it, the U.S.-backed and approved military coup attempt followed by the U.S.-backed referendum that sought Chavez's removal. Both indicated a deep fear on the part of the leading Venezuelan capitalists and U.S. imperialism that Chavez's Bolivarian Revolution may go beyond the bounds of bourgeois reform.

4) There is an ongoing class polarization in Venezuelan society with a native bourgeoisie frightened that its power and property may be challenged by the revolutionary mobilization of the masses. Chavez has given considerable impetus to innumerable mass mobilizations that have increased the confidence of the workers and oppressed in their own power. At the same

time he has refused arms to mobilized Venezuelan peasants to defend themselves from death squads organized by large landowners to protect their property.

5) The Chavez regime has allowed a few nationalizations of capitalist property and takeovers of idle land. Following an official investigation, it was decreed, for example, that a portion of the land owned by a major British corporation was idle and therefore subject to government

nationalization and distribution to peasants. Land and factories that have been abandoned by their owners were subject to nationalization. In the case of the abandoned and subsequently occupied Venepal factory in Caracas, it today functions under a system of worker's control with the Government retaining 51 percent ownership. The details of this agreement are not yet clear. In recent weeks the government announced the distribution of 100,000 hectares of idle land to individual peasant families

6) Chavez has used funds from Venezuela's prosperous oil industry, enriched for the time being by a huge rise in the price of oil, to fund significant educational, health, water and other social programs that have won him a mass following.

7) In the international arena Chavez has opposed the U.S. imperialist war in Iraq and extended his government's solidarity to revolutionary Cuba, pledging that an attack on Cuba would be considered an attack on Venezuela. He has rejected imperialist projects in the region from the FTAA to Plan Colombia, counterposing an anti-imperialist trade association of Latin American states that, while operating in the framework of capitalism, would

nevertheless prioritize, he asserts, the needs of the region's people as opposed to U.S. corporations. He has made bold and principled assertions rejecting imperialist interventions everywhere. He has rejected the ongoing U.S. threats against Iran going so far as to state that Iran has the same right to possess nuclear weapons as the imperialist nations

8) Chavez has publicly opposed the capitalist model of development and proclaimed his adherence to socialism. The Cuban news agency, Agencia Cubana de Noticias (AIN), in a recent article entitled, "Venezuela Begins a New Era Despite US Interventionism," notes:

"Havana, March 24 (AIN) While Washington continues its efforts to find an excuse that will justify stepped up aggression against Venezuela, the people of that South American nation are getting ready to defend their sovereignty and begin a new era, an era of Christian socialism." It is still too early to evaluate Chavez's intent when he declared his socialist

persuasion. It is far better to learn about his ideas based on deeds rather than formal definitions or even Chavez's words, which may be chosen for defensive purposes. We will soon see.

Chavez has rejected the Stalinist caricature of socialism in the ex-USSR and implies that a vibrant revolutionary socialist model may be in accord with his thinking. He has praised the ideas of Leon Trotsky, including permanent revolution, counterposing them to Stalinist politics and practice. We will soon see if the "Christian socialism" reported by the Cubans is a cautious defensive formulation utilized to buy time in the face of increasing U.S. threats or a populist term for an enlightened capitalism.

9) Socialist Action supports all progressive measures taken by the Chavez government. We defend Venezuela against any and all imperialist threats. We view the recent referendum as the second effort of U.S. imperialism to remove the Chavez government and believe that it was entirely within our principles to oppose the referendum without granting political support

to Chavez's bourgeois populist government.

10) We support all efforts aimed at the deepening mobilization of the Venezuelan people to fight for their own class interests. While we have little information about the Venezuelan Bolivarian Circles we would not oppose participation in them to the extent that they aim at the

independent mobilization of the masses to challenge bourgeois prerogatives.

11) The formation of a mass revolutionary party based on the historic program of the Fourth International remains a critical next step to help guide the unfolding revolutionary process underway in Venezuela. While such a party would by its very nature join in all united front mobilizations to advance the interests of the workers and their allies among the oppressed,

it would never subordinate such struggles to any political formation that does not share its socialist program and struggle for a workers and peasants government that fights for socialism.

12) Whatever our justified skepticism (to say the least) regarding the capacity of a bourgeois populist political figure like Chavez to break from capitalist politics and lead the kind of mass democratic mobilization sufficient to challenge and conquer Venezuela's capitalist state power and establish a workers state, it must be subordinate to a factual analysis of the actions taken by Chavez and his followers. Regardless of Chavez's actions, however, the need for an independent revolutionary socialist party rooted in the Venezuelan reality and oriented to the revolutionary seizure of power and the overturn of capitalism cannot be disputed.

13) We remain wary of facile comparisons between the ongoing Venezuelan process and the Cuban Revolution. Despite the initial political limitations of the Castro team and its petty-bourgeois origins it proved capable of leading a revolutionary war that toppled a U.S.-backed dictatorship. It crushed the essential bourgeois institutions of Cuban society required for

the continued oppression of the masses, that is, the Batista police and army. It armed the masses to advance and defend their own class interests. Having successfully undertaken these momentous incursions on the bourgeois power, the Castro leadership then proved capable of leading the mass mobilizations that toppled capitalism entirely. To date, Chavez has yet to demonstrate such capabilities. But we do not close the door to the possibility that he will.

Latin American revolution on the rise

There are ongoing developments of critical importance to revolutionary socialists in Latin America. These include the successive electoral victories of bourgeois populist-type parties that in part oppose imperialism's neo-liberal project that has reduced the quality of life and

living standards of hundreds of millions. Gerry Foley will review these developments in detail as a supplement to this report.

The U.S. crisis deepens

There has been no let up in the attacks launched by the Bush Administration in alliance with its friends in the Democratic Party. The latest assault is aimed at the last great bastion of funds accumulated by America's workers over a lifetime, Social Security. As with all such "great debates" between Republicans and Democrats the sound and fury will soon be replaced by "realistic" compromises that allow the ruling rich to loot Social Security to the tune of trillions of dollars in the name of saving a system that has already been looted to the tune of trillions. We fully expect that whatever forms the looting takes, working people will be the victims.

Make no mistake! Wherever there is money owed to workers and regardless of the legal guarantees in place to assure that it remains their property, the ruling rich will find "legal" ways to steal it. In California, the largest state employee pension fund in the country is today under scrutiny, with the Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger administration looking for ways to

Raid it to raise funds for their capitalist bosses.

A recent Supreme Court decision allowed a major coal mining corporation to sell its operations and free itself from its legal obligation to pay mineworkers' pensions that were earned over decades. The legal rationale? The multi-billion dollar corporation said that the price of its sale would be too high for anyone to pay if it included an obligation by the new

owners to pay the pensions. The court ruled that it was supposedly better for the workers still employed by the purchasing company to have jobs than it was for the mine to close down and the old owner obligated to pay the pensions. The idea that the pensions and the workers should be paid apparently did not occur to the astute capitalist judge!

Stealing money from workers' pensions is nothing new. One of the world's largest corporations, General Motors, has regularly financed its operations by "borrowing" from its workers' pension fund. If GM goes under or finds some "legal" "restructuring" ploy to change its ownership structures in order to negate its pension payment obligations, it will likely be

Forgiven trillions owed to workers who have spent a lifetime on the job.

Nothing is sacred in capitalist law or politics. Virtually no social programs remain intact with both parties daily assigning their budget experts to cut every hard won social program to the bone or to eliminate it entirely.

Parallel to these efforts is the continued allocation of hundreds and billions more to the military industrial complex, U.S. capitalism's version of Keynesian pump-priming designed to salvage sinking corporations whose ever declining average profit rates threaten one corporation after another with bankruptcy.

World capitalist competition has reduced some of the mightiest players to desperate and often corrupt solutions. The New York Times recently reported that in addition to the most obvious corporations like World Com and Enron, that cooked the books to show profits that never existed, an additional 300 capitalist enterprises resorted to illegal accounting measures to hide their losses in order to avoid a collapse in the price of their stocks. But the collapse was inevitable. Smoke and mirrors do not compete on world markets, where weaker players are weeded out faster than in any time in history.

Continually demanding new tax concessions and outright gifts from the government, the flagging corporate establishment has taken out its growing incapacity to effectively compete on world markets on the broad American working class. Three million jobs have been lost since 2001. In the U.S. today the formal unemployment rate stands at 5.2 percent but these same government statisticians who produce this fundamentally flawed figure are compelled to admit that 34.2 percent of the eligible U.S. workforce have no job, a startling figure that indicates the depth of the economic crisis.

Unlike John Maynard Keynes's solution to impending capitalist disaster, based on his interesting but incorrect assessment that capitalism's central problem rested in what he called a "lack of aggregate demand," today's ruling rich lack the means to implement any form of public works program to increase workers' purchasing power. Even in Keynes's time the ratio of money spent on the military as opposed to public works was perhaps 99 to 1. War spending not public works helped to partially lift capitalism out of the depression that began in 1929. "Prosperity" returned only after the U.S. emerged victorious in a world war that killed 80 million people and destroyed the industrial infrastructure of both America's enemies and allies. War solves lots of problems for capitalism!

In the name of national security, or bringing "democracy" to the world, or whatever pretext is convenient, ever new schemes are invented and promoted by the corporate owned media to justify the expenditure of incredible sums on war materials. The expenditures, literally gifts to the ruling class-owned corporations, are required to prevent a collapse of the system itself. And they are still insufficient to counter the constant decline in average profit rates that threaten to explode the entire system.

With corporations paying virtually no taxes and workers incomes shrinking, U.S. Treasury revenues are in constant decline. A revealing March 13, 2005 New York Times editorial entitled "Bush's Stealthy Tax Increase," reports that in the coming years the number of two-income essentially working class families whose taxes will be dramatically increased will rise from 3 million taxpayers to 30 million. This will include 94 percent of two-income families with children, who earn a total of \$75,000 to \$100,000. Bush's virtually hidden and delayed "alternative tax" provision is designed to rob workers to pay for the trillion dollar tax cuts to the rich previously approved by the U.S. Congress.

In order to maintain the constant flow of dollars to U.S. corporations that have more and more difficulty in competing on highly competitive and saturated world markets, borrowing ever larger sums from U.S. and especially international banks is a necessity. The figures on how much of the debt is paid by increasing the running time of the printing presses at the U.S. Mint is not known!

In the past year alone the U.S. debt has increased from \$7 to \$8 trillion. That rings up to an average monthly deficit of \$83.3 billion. In February 2005 the U.S. registered the largest single monthly budget deficit on record, \$114 billion. At this rate 2005 will record an annual budget deficit of \$1.368 trillion, boosting the national debt to almost \$9.4 trillion, another record.

The annual trade deficit has also increased to stratospheric heights, today representing 22 percent of the Gross Domestic Product an astounding and unprecedented figure by all accounts. For decades the percentage stood at approximately 3-4 percent. In January 2005 the U.S. trade deficit recorded the second highest monthly figure in history, \$58.3 billion.

The massive U.S. debt, constantly demanding interest payments (not to mention principal), coupled with the incapacity of the government to reduce the annual federal budget deficit, also requiring unprecedented interest and principal payments, has driven the value of the dollar to historic lows as measured against major foreign currencies.

We have written about this in *Socialist Action*. Here it is only necessary to state that for the first time in modern U.S. history the stability of the U.S. financial system is in doubt. These are not idle conclusions. They are publicly discussed in the leading capitalist journals across the globe. Japan, China and indeed all of Europe have threatened to dump continually

devaluing dollars, thereby threatening the underpinnings of the world financial system. No one wants to hold on to an increasingly and rapidly declining U.S. currency. And today trillions of dollars of it are nervously held by the world's foreign banks.

The growing U.S. financial crisis, similar to the crises facing all capitalist nations, has driven American imperialism to new militaristic adventures everywhere. The slightest rise in the class struggle brings on threats of U.S. intervention, whether it be Bolivia or Venezuela or any

other Latin American nation where the masses resist imperialist exploitation and threaten to control their own destinies. The same is true on every continent.

As with all bullies the U.S. imperialists understand that it is only a matter of time until their victims fight back. In some places this will take the classical form of mass mobilization and class struggle to end the capitalist system once and for all.

The danger of nuclear war

In others, the solution is not so clear. The bully exploiters fear that absent any other option to liberate themselves from foreign domination, some groups, if not nations, might well resort to nuclear weapons to ward off their oppressors. As irrational as this may sound, the continued

horrors perpetrated by world imperialism could well result in such a catastrophe. The U.S. government is well aware of the danger. This is among the main reasons why it exerts the massive pressure it does on Iran to stop its plans to develop fissionable material for nuclear power plants.

A recent New York Times article made it absolutely clear that by all international standards Iran has the right to refine and otherwise process nuclear material for the purpose of energy production. The Times pointed out that this fact is well known to the entire world. It explains, says The Times, why most European nations have failed, at least until recently, to follow the U.S. lead in threatening military action against Iran. Despite the fact that Iran's actions are totally within the framework of "international law," The Times notes, the U.S. consciously disregards such legalities because it fears an Iranian nuclear attack.

The U.S. is the first and only nation to use nuclear weapons. It seriously contemplated their use during the Korean and Vietnam Wars as well as during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. In their pursuit of power, profit and the inherent imperative to world domination U.S. warmakers know no limitations. The danger of nuclear war is greater today than at any other time.

The state of the U.S. labor movement

We have written much about the crisis facing the organized labor movement including the fact that at 8.2 percent the organized work force stands at the lowest point in the past century.

The timid and bankrupt SEIU-led "opposition" to the present AFL-CIO misleaders see no way out of the impasse other than so-called structural reforms that are based on forced and bureaucratic

consolidations without a semblance of democracy, coupled with increased support to the Democratic Party.

The feature articles in the last few issues of our newspaper by Jeff Mackler and David Jones present our analysis of the current debate and in broad outline review our class struggle alternative. But as with all things in politics, ideas designed to meet the needs of workers to defend and advance their interests take hold only when the living forces capable of giving them expression are in motion. This is not yet the situation we face.

The tremendous and still unanswered attacks, including plant closures, reconstitution of entire industries abroad and the general feeling that it takes more than labor has readily available to defeat the bosses, have frustrated an important layer of trade unionists and delayed a response. Additionally, millions of unorganized workers remain atomized, lacking

The most minimal organization with which to fight back.

We need not review our assessment of the nature of the bureaucracy. We have no confidence in any of the competing forces in the AFL-CIO. All are looking to save their jobs and privileges by any means necessary except a fight with the boss class.

We have no magic formulas to offer that will turn things around today. There is no magic set of transitional demands that will galvanize workers to combat. In the context of the relocation of major sectors of the industrial workforce and the demise of entire industries demands like

30 for 40 seem more relevant to bygone times when the introduction of a few new machines here and there and minimal workforce reduction were the threat.

What has been lost in the trade union movement for many a decade now is its mass social character. Narrow trade unionism isolated from the broad issues that effect all workers and the oppressed has led to a dead end.

A recent *Socialist Action* article presented a hypothetical scenario outlining how workers can fight back and win. It was designed to be a very practical assessment of a difficult situation. In referring to how the UFCW-led Southern California grocery strike of 70,000 workers last year could have been won we began with the simple idea that the Teamsters Union,

hypothetically speaking, did have the power to stop deliveries to the UFCW-struck supermarkets. In fact, for a few days, for the record only, Teamster drivers did stop deliveries in solidarity with the striking grocery workers. But the IBT bureaucracy quickly put an end to this solidarity.

But what if Teamster drivers, en masse, and until victory, had respected the picket lines? That would have presented the bosses with a profound problem; no food to sell in the entire Los Angeles area!

We pointed out, hypothetically again, that the bosses would resort to allsorts of injunctions, police scab-herding, media attacks on the heartless "food-denying workers," and all the rest. We responded that there were 100,000 other Teamsters in the area. They too could have joined the effort and stopped the scabs cold, countering the corporate media charge that

The strikers were isolated anti-social if not greedy high paid workers.

This in turn would have presented the bosses with new problems. They would respond by bringing in additional thousands of police and would-be scabs, if not the National Guard, to break the strike.

By this time the workers would have had a real taste of their power. They would call on their families, friends and neighbors for help, and on the unemployed and oppressed nationalities, not to mention on the dockworkers, city workers, construction workers, oil workers and everyone else. Such a mobilization would serve to raise the stakes qualitatively beyond the

issues involved in the original strike. Essentially, the city and surrounding areas would be brought to a halt with the threat of further solidarity actions mounting daily.

The idea is simple. Solidarity is the essential ingredient for success. And solidarity is a two-way street. It means that when you help us, we help you. It means that your strength becomes ours and visa versa, that organized workers fight to organize the unorganized, to incorporate them in union structures, that unions champion the struggles of oppressed

nationalities and women and gays and lesbians, the youth and everyone else.

This hypothetical scenario is not in the cards today, but only because there is not a single trade union or trade union leader in the country who believes in the class struggle, who has the courage to lead workers in a real fight, who is not tied hand and foot to either the bosses or the politicians or both.

Until we see a change in the composition of the trade union leadership, there will be no real victories. The central premise of our Transitional Program and its underlying method is a fighting labor movement. Its demands, immediate, democratic, and transitional grew out of an era when workers had demonstrated their capacity to fight and win. Our demands were designed to deepen the struggle and educate workers as to the very nature of the state power and to challenge it, once and for all. It is not just the individual corporations who are the workers' enemies but the ruling class as a whole and the capitalist government that represents them.

In our view the sustained and deepening attacks on workers, in the trade unions and outside as well, must eventually give way to new formations of class struggle fighters. These newcomers, helped along by the cadre that we and other revolutionaries educate, will find a way to the ranks and begin the process of engaging them in struggle. It is this struggle and

Nothing else that will produce the new leaders and inspire the ranks to transform the trade unions from top to bottom, taking on the bosses in the process.

The revitalized and fighting trade union movement to come must and will become the champion of the whole class, not only as a matter of philosophical principle but as matter of survival. With workers in motion, everything that seems impossible today will become the norm tomorrow. Every apparently insurmountable obstacle will be challenged as never before.

The rules of the game as they have been laid out by today's labor misleaders, politicians, court decisions and all the rest, will be re-written as they were in the past.

What is lacking today is not some new structure for the unions or consolidation project but rather a will to fight. Given that will the unity will follow as night follows day, regardless of what structures exist.

Finally, it is not true that unions are too small to win today. Virtually any union can win, if it wins the solidarity of the rest of labor and its allies.

This pertains to every problem facing labor today, including the de-industrialization of significant parts of the productive process and the outsourcing of jobs beyond U.S. borders. For the bureaucracy the solution to the boss's shifting production to China or Mexico is tokenism, that is, sending a few AFL-CIO representatives on an international junket to

this or that country and offering a few dollars to organizing efforts there. Or, they propose one or another form of protectionism, counterposing U.S. jobs to those of our sisters and brothers in other countries. Serious workers, if not all workers, more and more understand that these are ineffective, if not reactionary solutions that are incapable of answering the assaults

they face.

However important international solidarity is, and it is essential, the fight begins at home against our own bosses, the most powerful on earth. With a few victories under our belts here and the bosses on the run, our capacity to repeat our success everywhere, including in China or Mexico or El Salvador or Haiti, will be magnified.

American workers fighting back and winning will inspire workers everywhere that they can win as well. Once this process begins there will wondrous ways that our sisters and brothers everywhere will find to win and we will find ways to help them that are concrete and immediate.

Having said the obvious, we must patiently prepare now for what is to come. That means education and propaganda, winning the best fighters to our revolutionary program, explaining the relationship between a union fight for a decent contract, job security and all the rest and a fight to win the hearts and minds of the broad working class. Our jointly published new pamphlet is a good start in this educational process. The patient work our union comrades do today will pay off tomorrow.

U.S. Labor Against War, the Labor Party and Million Worker March

Here are three formations that in one way or another seek to bring about some important changes in the labor movement and in the broader working class. They are quite different formations but we will begin with some general observations that apply to them all.

All are essentially organized, led or kept going by radicals and socialists of one sort or another, None have any deep or even significant connections with labor's rank and file. None emerged from a major fightback where class struggle policies resulted in a victory that inspired their formation. None are capable of mobilizing significant numbers of workers to challenge the bosses at the point of production or anywhere else. All have associated

with them a layer of union officials that give the organization some credibility. None of these officials have a reputation of leading workers in struggle. Many of these officials are radicals or socialists who have found a home in the secondary ranks of the labor movement.

Having stated the obvious, we do not oppose our comrades' participation in these formations when it serves our aim of meeting radicalizing rank and filers and advancing working class interests. We generally agree with the basic political ideas formally raised by these formations. We see a crying need for labor to become involved in the struggle against war. We totally support any efforts educate about the need for a fighting labor party based

on a reinvigorated labor movement in alliance with the oppressed, unemployed and other fighting social movements. We see an absolute need for labor to organize millions in the streets to challenge the warmakers, oppose the twin parties of capital and champion health care, public education and all the other critical social issues.

We have a single criterion in assessing the nature and level of our participation in these formations. Do they offer us an opportunity to meet workers in any significant numbers who are beginning to radicalize under the impact of the boss's offensive? If the answer to this question is "yes" we urge our comrades, as they have already done and presently do, to

Become involved to the extent that gains can be made for our tiny revolutionary nucleus.

These are the kind of national organizations whose affiliates exist at the local level in a relatively small number of cities across the country. In some instances they include important numbers of rank and filers. In most, however, they are limited to a grouping of radicals and minor officials, with few independents, who eventually tire of small meetings and

Constant infighting and shift to other priorities.

We have noted that the main limitation of all of the above organizations is that they are largely artificial, that is, they are not a product of a real fightback that galvanizes workers to explore new ways of fighting the bosses. They are instead, the best intentions of their organizers aside, very modest, sometimes barely effective formations, that, because of

The difficult times, are incapable of attracting fighting workers and/or significantly advancing important ideas.

We will not take the time to analyze and assess the various political tendencies or socialist currents that tend to dominate these formations. Most are not friendly to SA or to each other, to say the least. Our starting point, however, is not whether this or that group leads but

Rather whether there is productive work to be done and new forces to do it.

We have left the decision to participate to our comrades, whose judgment we respect. We have no rigid formulas to determine how we approach these still limited and experimental-type formations that could modestly advance the interests of working people.

Our correction in regard to the Million Worker March

Comrades should note that we did make a correction in our assessment of the Million Worker March (MWM). The first of the two articles appearing in Socialist Action essentially overstated the importance of the broad layer of initial endorsements the march won from several important unions and union-related organizations. We incorrectly saw these, in the context of AFL-CIO opposition to the MWM, as representing something new, that is, a will to express labor's power in the streets. We were sadly mistaken, substituting wishes for fact, a bad method for effective work. Without going into all the leadership problems and extreme narrowness of the forces leading this effort, we did correct our exaggerated assessment of the nature of the development, believing that this was the best, if not the only way, to inform our readers that our newspaper is to be taken seriously. We are not a newspaper that hypes reality to make it fit our political objectives.

The Lynne Stewart conviction

Lynne Stewart's conviction on multiple felony counts of conspiracy to aid and abet the commission of terrorist acts is a prime indication that the government has every intention of tightening its control of all forms of political activity.

We have written extensively on this case and need not repeat the details. We will note that after six years of government spying on Stewart and her legal associates, after 85,000 wiretaps, and every other form of illegal (now made "legal") surveillance, after finding absolutely no evidence that Stewart had engaged in any activity that did harm or threatened to do harm or resulted in harm to anyone, she was convicted on charges that carry a prison sentence of 30 years. Stewart is 65.

Conspiracy charges have long been employed by capitalist governments to imprison innocent people solely because they are alleged to have had contact with others who MAY have engaged in what has been designated by a repressive government as an illegal act.

Stewart's conviction by a frightened Manhattan jury is an indication that the government has had some success in at least temporarily convincing some Americans that the U.S. and its citizens are truly faced with a real threat and that it may well come from radicals and socialists residing in the U.S.

The vigorous defense of Lynne Stewart is critical to the entire progressive movement. If her conviction, now under appeal, is allowed to stand, it will represent a major defeat for fundamental democratic rights and will result in deeper incursions on the right to effectively organize against injustice in every arena of social life.

It is no accident that the government chose a well-known socialist and lifelong defender of the oppressed to prosecute and test the reactionary laws they have put in place to stifle dissent of any kind. As with all defense cases Stewart's freedom rests in the capacity of her supporters to mount a broad and mighty fightback that reaches out to everyone concerned

with political freedom and the right of association. Socialist Action has been deeply engaged in Stewart's defense and will continue to be so.

Mumia Abu-Jamal

2006 will mark the tenth year of our effort to free Mumia-Abu-Jamal. We have won a national reputation as being among the best and most consistent of his defenders. Mumia's legal case is winding through the federal courts with many twists and turns. As with Lynne Stewart, we seek to build the kind of powerful defense that will make his continued imprisonment on frame-up murder charges impossible. But nationally-coordinated mass

mobilizations for Mumia, as we were able to initiate in 1999, are not in the cards today unless there is an immediate threat to life.

Our Mumia efforts have met with considerable success, with Mumia's name and the basic facts of the case becoming increasingly well known among a broad layer of social groups and political activists. We have also noted the continuous growth of Mumia as a political leader and thinker. His support to the Cuban Revolution and to virtually every struggle where workers

Fight back against oppression and injustice make him our comrade in the deepest sense of the term. He is a regular reader of our paper and has come to trust our judgment on many important matters. Mumia's greetings to the founding convention of the YSA indicate his solidarity with our efforts as well.

"Red" states and "blue" states

A few words on the red state/blue state analysis are worthy of mention. The corporate media is fond of using these terms to signify major political divisions in U.S. society, that is, among U.S. workers. Red states, according to the liberals and media pundits, stand for Republican, if not Christian conservatism while the blue indicate Democratic Party bi-coastal liberalism.

We question this analysis, noting that roughly half of the eligible electorate declined to vote. An important New York Times poll conducted shortly after the 2004 election that included the opinions of all eligible voters, regardless of whether or not they voted or were registered,

indicated that on virtually all major social, political and economic issues the majority, or large plurality, held what we would consider progressive views, that is, opposition to war, support for abortion rights and women's equality, wariness of increasing business influence on government and all the rest.

It would be difficult to conclude otherwise. In the face of across-the-board government and corporate attacks on the vast majority it is to be expected that anger, frustration, distrust and questioning of government policies would be on the rise, despite the corporate media's attempt to deflect these sentiments and channel them toward reactionary conclusions. Whatever success the ruling class has had in momentarily bending the minds of the ignorant has been more than offset by its incapacity to solve fundamental and growing social crises.

While it is obvious that the ideology and actions of the ruling class has shifted hard to the right, it is not at all clear that the same is the case with the working masses, the victims of their policies.

It is true that many workers have been stunned and feel helpless in the face of the loss of their jobs, pensions and other incursions on their well-being and security. They are wary of engaging in struggles where the possibility of victory seems remote because the forces arrayed against them seem all powerful. But American workers have far from accepted the

permanent nature of their present state.

When the opportunity arises and the call of necessity is matched by a leadership that shows it has the strategy and tactics to win, we can expect an unprecedented response. To assume the opposite runs counter to a materialist analysis and the history of the world class struggle. The victims of oppression and injustice do not long seek salvation at the hands of their exploiters. We have appended a revealing article to this resolution that contains a number of revealing statistics that reveal the deepening class divide in the U.S.

The democratic right to same-sex marriage

The important and democratic right to marriage by same-sex couples was defeated in some eleven state initiatives in 2004. The defeats were, in our view a product of a discussion that rapidly emerged on the political scene without an opportunity to seriously debate and counter the reactionary media assault on gay and lesbian rights and the right to same-sex marriage in particular.

We do not view this development as evidence of deepening prejudice. The national discussion over this fundamental democratic right has now become part of an important dialogue that widens the opportunity to expose and fight against the not so hidden discriminatory laws that deny basic rights to gays and lesbians in many areas of public life.

A March 2005 California state court decision annulling last November's passage of an anti-gay marriage ballot measure as a denial of the equal protection provisions of the U.S. Constitution is but one indication that reactionary laws on this subject are more and more difficult to defend, even in bourgeois courts.

We also note the virtually complete collapse of supposedly enlightened Democrats on this issue, who subordinated their alleged support to equal rights for gays and lesbians to a "political" decision to avoid embarrassment to their anti-gay presidential candidate.

We fully expect this fight for basic equality to continue as well as many others associated with combating LGBT prejudice and discriminatory legislation. Socialist Action will continue to solidly support this struggle.

Global warming

In recent months several serious reports have indicated that the rate of progression of global warming is roughly double the previously accepted figure. This simple fact signals a rapidly approaching environmental catastrophe that will likely threaten or take the lives of qualitatively

more people than die in imperialist war.

While there have been several impressive conferences and studies on this subject, there is virtually no organized mass effort to respond. Of course, the prime cause of global warming is the capitalist mode of production and its overwhelming reliance on fossil fuels as the primary source of power production. According to the studies, the damage already done cannot be

reversed before a major price in human life is paid, even if the level of fossil fuel emissions is qualitatively reduced immediately.

For most, these conclusions are difficult to absorb. The creeping death that approaches seems imperceptible when observed on a day to day basis and it seems obvious to most that there are more pressing issues of personal and family survival confronting humanity, not to mention war.

Wars kill tens and hundreds of thousands and more each year. The effects of global warming are not as obvious. While we will pay close attention to any and all opportunities to educate and organize on this question, we must recognize that our best opportunities to build the essential mass revolutionary party capable of challenging the system as a whole remains in

those areas where significant forces are already in motion and beginning to challenge the status quo. Such is the case with the Iraq War, where we cannot fail to take advantage of the actual openings that exist to win new forces to our movement.

As a very small group of revolutionaries we must be totally conscious of the difference between when our work is necessarily limited to patient education and when mass action is the order of the day. The participants in the latter struggles provide the human material we need now to fight on other fronts as soon as conditions allow. We can expect the issue of

War and the associated issues of a possible draft, combined with massive cuts in all social arenas, to lend impetus to increased levels of struggle that will more easily facilitate the building of our combat party in formation. But we must not fail to educate now on the terrible environmental catastrophe ahead.

Capitalist restoration in the former workers' states

We began an internal literary discussion on this issue with a discussion and debate at last summer's national convention, hoping to conclude the discussion by a full debate and vote at this plenum. But the press of events has severely restricted our capacity to conduct a thorough discussion on this important issue. We propose therefore to continue the

literary discussion, provide additional material to comrades, encourage more participation and postpone a vote to a least to the next National Committee plenum, approximately six months from now.

The founding convention of Youth for Socialist Action

Of all the activities to which our youth have devoted their energies over the past many years, perhaps the most important is the building of a revolutionary youth organization that has fraternal and collaborative relations with Socialist Action. Despite the modest numbers our

Youthful party leaders and YSAers have won to this project, the existence of the YSA has significantly improved our capacity to meet fine revolutionary-minded youth who have a passion for involvement in the struggle for human equality and liberation. The growth of the YSA, a project to which we must devote our consistent attention, will be a measure of the growth of Socialist Action.

The YSA's ten-point program, its essential criteria for membership, is an excellent summarization of the program that anchors Socialist Action.

Building the YSA has engaged our youth in a broad range of activities from labor organizing drives to alliances with fighting farmers to struggles for gay and lesbian rights and against all forms of discrimination against gays and lesbians to fighting against the imperialist-created horror in Iraq.

It took almost seven years to assemble the necessary critical mass of youthful, talented and educated party cadre to give life to a project that bodes well for engaging both the YSA and SA in the struggles ahead.

Socialist Action seeks the closest collaboration with the YSA. We are pledged to spare no effort to help it grow into a mass revolutionary youth organization that will prove to be fully capable of winning the future fighters to challenge capitalist barbarism and contribute to building the mass revolutionary party of the American socialist revolution.

Important regroupment possibilities

For the first time in a long while we have engaged in discussions and collaboration with a group of comrades who we hold in great respect and with whom we hope to soon work together with in a common organization. These are a small but very experienced group of comrades who have worked together for many years producing Labor Standard (LS), first in

Magazine format and more recently in an on-line website format.

Most of the comrades involved are former members of the SWP, who were expelled or forced out at the same time as the founders of Socialist Action, some 22 years ago.

We have found that there has been a substantial convergence on several very important issues. These include:

1) A common assessment of the state of the present labor movement, the important debate in the AFL-CIO and the key tasks facing class struggle labor militants inside and outside the trade union movement today. The convergence is reflected in the fruitful exchanges and political collaboration that has resulted in our joint publication of a new pamphlet oriented to serious labor activists. The pamphlet is entitled, "New Unity or Six Feet Under? Where is the AFL-CIO Going?: The leadership debate and the underlying issues." Authored by LS Twin Cities railworker and labor historian, David Jones and including two fine and very relevant

articles by oldtime SWPers Frank Lovell and Tom Kerry, the 32-page pamphlet will serve

us well in helping to educate the new generation of fighters who will emerge to challenge today's labor fakers and embark on the class struggle road.

2) A deep appreciation of the continued revolutionary course of the Cuban Revolution and the discussion inside Cuba initiated by Celia Hart on the relevance of the ideas of Leon Trotsky. Our collaboration consists on an agreement to jointly publish a book, including some 20 of Hart's essays on Trotsky and related issues. The book, approved for publication by Hart,

will include two excellent 1961 speeches by Joseph Hansen on Cuba and permanent revolution.

3) Initial discussions indicate a convergence on our assessment of the state of the present antiwar movement and the need for a principled "Out Now!" democratic, united and national coalition oriented to independent mass mobilizations against the U.S. warmakers.

4) A common appreciation of the importance of the youth in rebuilding the revolutionary party. Our Mid-western comrades have already met and exchanged ideas with Dave Jones and to some extent with Michael L., who reside in the Twin Cities and who have offered to help educate our youth on our common revolutionary socialist heritage.

5) A shared appreciation on the importance of the fundamental ideas of Trotskyism and the best traditions of the SWP, including the absolute necessity of building a mass revolutionary socialist party as the indispensable instrument for the socialist revolution.

6) A shared appreciation of our historic working class approach to electoral politics including support for socialist campaigns and independent working class political action as opposed to middle class reform-oriented electoral projects.

Several LS comrades have been regularly contributing valuable articles to Socialist Action thereby enriching the paper with a range of articles that we would not otherwise have been able to obtain.

We have engaged in meetings with David Jones directly and have collaborated and have had discussions with a number of other LS comrades in regard to newspaper articles, developments in Cuba and the labor movement, antiwar work and a broad range of other issues. Dave has visited our SF national headquarters and a number of comrades, including our youth leaders have had fruitful exchanges with him in the Twin Cities.

At least three LS comrades will be attending our April plenum and founding YSA convention.

SA comrades Gerry Foley and Adam Ritscher will be attending an April 23 Kansas City labor activist conference initiated by LS member Bill O. and his labor activist associates in the region. They have scheduled time for Gerry and Adam to meet with other LS comrades who will be attending that gathering.

In summary, we are engaged in a fruitful series of common projects, common work and ongoing discussions that we hope will result in the unification of our forces inside Socialist Action. We place a high priority on continuing and deepening this collaboration. Our capacity to welcome, embrace and fully include these experienced revolutionary cadre will represent a

Major advance in building Socialist Action and will serve to inspire other experienced revolutionaries, who are similarly working closely with us in Connecticut and San Francisco, to join our common project.

The new and inspiring developments we have described on the world and national scene coupled with the new forces with whom we have established comradely and collaborative relations bode well for our tiny nucleus of revolutionary fighters. If we prove capable of taking advantage of the opportunities before us we will significantly improve our capacity to

advance the building of Socialist Action and our capacity to join with the new fighters who will inevitably appear on the class struggle scene.

Appendix:

The Cavernous Divide

by Scott Klinger,

AlterNet. Posted March 21, 2005.

<http://www.alternet.org/story/21544/>